

A Comparative Study on Japanese Language and Sinhala Language: With Special Reference on How Cultural Differences Affect the Communication of Sinhala Learned JICA Volunteers Working in Sri Lanka

Mohotti J E

Department of Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

janukaedirimanna@yahoo.co.jp

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) dispatches Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) for various fields in Sri Lanka. A pre-dispatch training is given for the JOCVs, which consists of a Sinhala Language course. Before starting their profession in Sri Lanka, they experience one month homestay with a Sri Lankan Family and another Sinhala Language course. Yet, some difficulties and usage errors are still visible in their daily conversations with the Sinhalese. The objective of this research is to identify the reasons behind these language barriers. And it would also be a portrayal of the differences in language usage according to the social values and attitudes of both nations. The author expects to introduce the findings to the JICA Sri Lanka office to propose them a reconsideration of their Sinhala language courses. This research is based mostly on primary data, collected through Face to face interviews with 10 JICA volunteers as the main sample, currently working in Sri Lanka. The structured interview is based on the Sinhala language text books which are used in the Sinhala language courses at JICA. Most of the volunteers pointed out that the language they have learned through text books is significantly different from the language used in daily conversations. Japanese are unable to recognize these differences since diglossia does not appear in Japanese language. Both languages have their endemic features in the usage which are determined on complexed cultural parameters. Without a knowledge of so called complexities, the volunteers are unable to capture the naturally engraved language usages in Sinhala. This research recommends the importance of a thorough cultural awareness program for the said volunteers.

Key words: *JICA, Sinhala language, Japanese language, Culture, Communication*